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STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS, INCLUDING SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE: SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES OR REGIONS

Special assistance to countries receiving refugees from Rwanda

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 49/24 of 2 December 1994 on special assistance to countries receiving refugees from Rwanda. In that resolution, the General Assembly, bearing in mind the serious crisis which had shaken Rwanda to its very foundations, expressed its deep concern about the grave social, economic, health and ecological impact of the massive and unexpected presence of refugees in the neighbouring countries. It commended the Governments of Burundi, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zaire for the sacrifices which they had made and for their continuing commitment to do their utmost to assist the refugees from Rwanda, notwithstanding the constraints which their limited resources placed on them, and urged all States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and international financial and development institutions to provide all financial, technical and material assistance possible with a view to facilitating the restoration of the basic services destroyed in the countries receiving refugees from Rwanda. The present report has been prepared on the basis of information received from United Nations offices in Burundi, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zaire by the end of August 1995.

2. Despite progress made to normalize the country, the situation in Rwanda remains fragile. Some 1.8 million Rwandan refugees are still outside the country. Continued insecurity prevents their repatriation and resettlement. The presence of military forces and militia of the former Government among the refugees has intimidated them and poses an external threat to the current Government of Rwanda. These forces have allegedly been rearmed and retrained in neighbouring countries. The forced repatriation of refugees from Zaire to Rwanda and Burundi between 19 and 23 August 1995 attested to the danger and destabilizing effects of such a large presence of refugees close to Rwanda's borders. It is an indication that the neighbouring countries, which have been shouldering a heavy burden by providing asylum to the refugees, have reached a limit.

II. GREAT LAKES REGION

3. The Regional Conference on Assistance to Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in the Great Lakes Region was held at Bujumbura from 12 to 17 February 1995. Organized and chaired jointly by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Conference discussed the issue of assistance to countries receiving refugees from Rwanda. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was requested to hold a round table of donors aimed at tackling the problems of zones that were seriously affected by damage resulting from the presence of refugees and displaced persons within the Great Lakes region, in order to coordinate the necessary action within the framework of an integrated approach.

4. UNDP sent an exploratory mission to the region from 9 April to 23 May 1995. It examined, in particular, the impact of the refugees' presence on the environment, and established that extensive damage had been caused to the ecosystems in areas of the Kivu region of eastern Zaire and the wetlands of the

Kagera River basin in the United Republic of Tanzania. Small projects initiated by UNHCR and the German Technical Assistance Corporation (GTZ) to mitigate the impact of firewood cutting, and another by UNHCR in cooperation with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) to repair the damage on the environment, have been overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of the refugee problem in the region. UNDP has concluded that the environmental dimension of the refugee situation merits and inter-agency assessment to establish long-term needs and assistance to the affected countries.

III. REPUBLIC OF BURUNDI

5. At the time that the Rwandan refugees moved into Burundi, the country had already been suffering the effects of its own October 1993 crisis, with a great number of internally displaced persons, physical damage to the basic service infrastructure, and a crisis of confidence that resulted in a lower level of efficiency in the provision of basic services. Moreover, throughout the past 22 months, Burundi has continued to suffer from inter-ethnic strife and general destabilization, with negative consequences in terms of basic service infrastructure and delivery.

6. The main negative effects of the presence of the Rwandan refugees have been on the schools, where refugees have stayed temporarily pending other arrangements, environmental degradation owing to the high consumption of firewood, and inflation in the economies of the urban centres of Muyinga and Ngozi. Actions by United Nations agencies to alleviate the situation have been taken through specific programmes, addressing the needs of Rwandan refugees and the affected Burundian population.

7. The following measures reflect the response to both the effects of the inflow of approximately 200,000 Rwandan refugees into Burundi, and of the internal crisis in the country.

8. Funds have been provided by UNHCR to assist with reforestation and to reinforce water and sanitation facilities in the hospitals of Kayanza and Ngozi. UNHCR is also actively involved in the rehabilitation of public schools in areas where refugees are living, as well as in the rehabilitation of access roads to the camps. In addition to providing assistance to approximately 200,000 refugees, UNHCR has been assisting 220,000 returnees and displaced persons and 5,000 urban poor. Secondary school and higher education for refugees is also provided, and a repatriation operation of former refugees from and to Rwanda has been implemented. Approximately US$ 30 million has been raised for these tasks.

9. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is providing basic drugs for health centres and has integrated supplementary feeding into health centre activities. Efforts are geared towards reinforcing the existing health network as well as integrating preventive and curative services of health and nutrition. It provides water to the displaced/affected population through a tanker delivery system, is assisting in the rehabilitation of water sources and in the exploitation of new sources, and monitors the quality of the water. It is building latrines and rehabilitating such structures in health centres and schools.

10. Other UNICEF activities include hygiene education and distribution of equipment and disinfectant. In order to strengthen basic education, teacher-training programmes have been developed. The development of a "peace curriculum" has been initiated. Finally, UNICEF identifies and assists 14,000 Burundian unaccompanied children. More than $10 million has been expended in these efforts.

11. The World Food Programme (WFP) is providing general food distribution to more than 200,000 internally displaced persons as well as 200,000 Rwandan refugees in Burundi and 150,000 Rwandan and Burundian refugees in Zaire. The reduction in regional food availability has led WFP to implement and accelerated reintegration programme for the internally displaced. In addition, its support covers forestry (e.g., plantation and nursery), infrastructure rehabilitation, including houses, schools and public buildings, support to cooperatives, such as income-generating activities, and road rehabilitation.

12. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has concentrated its efforts on providing displaced persons, returnees and refugees with agricultural tool kits and seeds. In addition, the Organization is involved in reforestation and stock breeding. A total of $12 million has been allocated for these tasks.

13. The World Health Organization (WHO) is implementing a four-pronged assistance effort, totalling nearly $3.9 million. Its efforts are focused on strengthening the National Epidemiological Surveillance Network, assisting in the prevention and control of communicable diseases and epidemics, supporting the provision of health services to the most affected provinces, and aiding in the prevention and control of sexually transmitted diseases. It also provides equipment to health centres in certain provinces.

IV. REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

14. The total refugee population in Uganda as at 31 March 1995 was 333,550, of which 6,390 were from Rwanda. The arrival of Rwandan Tutsis dates back to 1961. Before then, Rwandans moved freely between their country and Uganda mainly as immigrant workers providing manual labour. The victory of the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) and the establishment of a new Government in Rwanda in July 1994 prompted Tutsi refugees to return home. At the same time, Rwandan Hutu refugees entered southern Uganda and settled in Oruchinga (5,331) and Nakivale (1,059). These are old refugee settlements that were formerly occupied by Tutsi refugees.

15. As cattle herders, Rwandan refugees live a pastoral life and hence require considerable area for migration in search of food and water for their cattle. The departure of Rwandan refugees has had a pervasive impact on the settlement communities and, to some extent, the community as a whole. The socio-economic impact has been noted in terms of a substantial decrease in the volume of livestock and of agricultural production, as well as in the deterioration in educational and health facilities. In addition, there has been physical damage to the environment in the form of soil erosion, the deteriorating quality of water resources and other environmental consequences.

16. There appear to be few, if any, specific programmes aimed at facilitating the restoration of basic services adversely affected by the influx of Rwandan refugees. However, UNHCR has contributed to the construction of 40 kilometres of new road, the repair of existing roads, the procurement of tools for road construction and the payment of construction staff. WFP has contracted a firm to build a 47 km road between Bunagana and Kisoro. It has also contributed to the maintenance of the Masaka/Kampala road in order to mitigate the damage to the road infrastructure by the frequent utilization of heavy WFP trucks.

17. The Uganda Red Cross plans to integrate health services to be offered to both refugees and the local population. It also has implemented programmes aimed at encouraging the refugees to plant trees around the camps in order to stem the environmental degradation resulting from the construction of refugee shelters.

V. UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA

18. More than 700,000 refugees entered the United Republic of Tanzania after war erupted in Rwanda in 1994. With coordinated international support and the assistance of the Tanzanian Government, these refugees were processed successfully and settled in refugee camps at the Tanzanian-Rwandan border area. Their presence impacted negatively on the local population and in particular on the area's infrastructure, administrative and managerial resources, and security. The depletion of fuelwood resources and deforestation, the contamination of water resources, the depletion of ground water and surface water, the loss of access to water sources by villagers, and land degradation constitute serious environmental damage to the area. Women and children were especially affected by the depletion of forest resources and the use of limited water resources in terms of water and fuelwood collection. In the social and health fields, the presence of refugees generated concern about the spread of communicable diseases and increased pressure on existing facilities. The prospects of food security were compromised by refugee demands in areas already suffering from declining food production. The large number of refugees and their needs and the limited resources available often led to conflict. In addition to an already declining infrastructure, roadways further depreciated as a result of heavy use in massive relief efforts. The administrative and managerial capacity at the district and regional levels was overstretched. Security costs increased inordinately.

19. While at the height of the Burundi refugee emergency, in December 1993, there were approximately 250,000 to 300,000 Burundian refugees in the Kigoma region, their number declined by the end of June 1995 to about 24,000.

20. On 13 December 1994, high-level delegations representing the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, 11 bilateral donors, several international organizations, the European Union, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations came together, for the first time since the start of the refugee influx, at Dar es Salaam for a donor conference. The Prime Minister of the United Republic of Tanzania outlined the Government's policy on refugees, which stresses the need to encourage their return to countries of origin. The Government also presented its programme for the rehabilitation of refugee-

affected communities in the Kagera region. The programme covered food security, environment, education, health, water and sanitation, infrastructure, and regional administration, all of which were enunciated as Government priorities. In response to the Government's request, the donors pledged more than $40 million. A review meeting will be held towards the end of 1995.

21. United Nations agencies and programmes have been active in the Kagera region in order to facilitate the restoration of the basic services destroyed by the refugee influx. Some of the activities pursued are described below.

22. UNDP has provided communication equipment to the Regional and District Commissioner's Office. A project to assist the regional administration in the coordination of the rehabilitation programme was approved.

23. A joint mission was fielded by UNDP, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) to the Kagera region from 16 to 24 May 1995, as a result of which proposals were made relating to (a) socio-economic development and human settlements, (b) energy problems and (c) water supply and sanitation. Donor funding is being sought for the proposals resulting from the mission.

24. Funds have been provided by UNHCR for rehabilitation and support to refugee-affected areas. This included support for improved forestry practices and improved fuel stoves, which have been introduced to local communities; the rehabilitation of water sources; the drilling of bore holes; and the farming of peat as cooking fuel and the use of papyrus as an alternative construction material, which have been implemented to protect wood resources. Furthermore, local schools and the Kigoma stadium, which were damaged during their temporary use as refugee accommodation, have been repaired. Support has been provided to the police force in the Kagera region in the form of vehicles, incentives, telecommunication equipment, accommodation, office equipment and buildings, training and operational costs.

25. UNICEF has provided kits composed of supplementary drugs, and medical equipment to hospitals and health centres in the districts hosting refugees.

26. Funds have been provided by IFAD to a project focusing on environmental conservation and rehabilitation, and on the rehabilitation of the physical infrastructure and support for the local government.

27. WFP has provided 2,000 tons of food to the local population affected by the influx of refugees. Within the context of the Rwanda/Burundi regional project, the United Republic of Tanzania plays a major role as a transit country for commodities along the southern corridor. This corridor is a major artery for humanitarian assistance to the refugee settlements not only in the United Republic of Tanzania, but also to those situated in eastern Zaire. WFP relief commodities are largely transported by the Tanzania Railway Cooperation (TRC). Assistance will be provided to increase the capacity of TRC.

28. A mission has been fielded by FAO to prepare agricultural development proposals in the refugee-affected districts of the Kagera region. A report

containing proposals and funding requirements is being finalized and will be presented to donors.

29. WHO has sent two epidemiologists to conduct studies.

VI. REPUBLIC OF ZAIRE

30. As of August 1995, there were some 1.1 million refugees in camps in and around Goma in northern Kivu, and Uvira in southern Kivu. It is estimated that the refugees make up more than 30 per cent of the people living in the two Kivu provinces. Such a high proportion of refugees has frequently led to tension and conflict with the local population. In addition, elements of the former Rwandan army and militia who have not been disarmed have contributed to the high level of insecurity along the borders. Their presence is a threat to the people and their property, particularly as they do not receive humanitarian assistance and have to survive on their own.

31. On 19 August 1995, Zairian authorities forcibly repatriated 181 Rwandan refugees from Goma to Rwanda. By 23 August, more than 15,000 Rwandan and Burundian refugees had been expelled. All 11 camps, with an appropriate population of 140,000 refugees, run by UNHCR in Zaire's Uvira area, were emptied after refugees fled into the surrounding hills to escape forced repatriation, thus deepening the ongoing refugee crisis in eastern Zaire. On 23 August, the Security Council called on Zaire, in spite of considerable difficulties, to host the refugees and, taking into account the important contribution Zaire had already made concerning the refugees, to stand by its humanitarian obligations and stop forcible repatriations. A day later, Zaire stopped the forced expulsion of refugees, thereby considerably easing the situation. The Secretary-General requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to undertake a mission to the region to engage in urgent discussions with the Government of Zaire and neighbouring States with a view to resolving the refugee situation.

32. Beyond the humanitarian crisis resulting from the flood of refugees, an environmental crisis is threatening the ecological balance in eastern Zaire. The environmental problems are especially acute in the Virunga National Park, a World Heritage site that is rich in rare species of mammals and birds. It is situated within walking distance of several refugee camps. It is estimated that 30,000 refugees forage in the Park daily, emerging with loads of wood for fuel and shelter.

33. Owing to the severity of the refugee situation, the international community has been focusing its assistance on covering the humanitarian needs of the refugees. However, whenever possible, efforts have been made to assist the local population and to protect the environment.

34. Assistance rendered by United Nations agencies and programmes included the following measures. As a follow-up to the Bujumbura Plan of Action of February 1995, UNDP is responsible for the coordination of an inter-agency mission, which will visit the Kivu region in the autumn of 1995 to (a) finalize the assessment of the impact of the refugees and other displaced persons on

local communities; (b) define the needs and propose priorities in the rehabilitation of the affected populations and areas; (c) estimate costs associated with this rehabilitation; and (d) help formulate an integrated programme to address the negative effects, already identified and attributed to the presence of the refugees in the Kivu provinces. Those effects are: (a) deforestation and poaching for food and fuel and trading by the refugees; (b) serious deterioration and saturation of major facilities, roads, airports, housing, schools and hospitals and dispensary facilities; (c) crowding out and disorganization of the health facilities; (d) degradation of the educational system; (e) drastic decrease in productivity in agriculture, livestock and fishing, causing shortages; (f) energy shortages; (g) water misuse and pollution, and sanitation problems; (h) insecurity of persons and their belongings; (i) delays in the reorganization and decentralization of the participation process in public decision-making.

35. Efforts have been made by UNHCR to diminish the illegal cutting of trees in the Virunga National Park and on private lands throughout eastern Zaire. In order to counter the damage to forest resources, funds have been made available for the supply and transportation of firewood to camps in eastern Zaire. In addition, several forest reserves have been identified that could be safely used for the supply of fuelwood. It is anticipated that the production of wood stoves will reduce the amount of firewood required by the refugees for cooking purposes.

36. Although a number of water systems have been established, efforts to increase the storage and distribution capacity will continue as the present supply is below UNHCR standards. Water supply and purification activities undertaken in Goma benefit not only refugees but are extended to the local population as well. In Bukavu, the drinking water system that was used to supply the refugee sites in the region is being rehabilitated so that it benefits not only refugees but also the local population. Health programmes for refugees also cover the needs of the local population when no alternative facilities are available. Sanitation assistance is given to local hospitals and schools.

37. Funds have been provided by UNICEF for vaccination programmes for the population of southern Kivu, water and sanitation rehabilitation, assistance to affected schools, assistance to local unaccompanied children, and drugs to Zairian health structures.

38. The strategic roads that had already been deteriorating before the influx of refugees into southern and northern Kivu have been rehabilitated by WFP to facilitate the transportation of people and goods for humanitarian purposes.

39. Since 1993, an emergency cattle vaccination programme (in northern and southern Kivu) has been carried out by FAO.

40. Funds have been provided by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for a protection programme in the Virunga National Park and a radio broadcasting programme aimed at spreading messages of peace.

41. An epidemiological surveillance system for the Great Lakes region has been established by WHO and a sanitation officer has been fielded.

VII. CONTRIBUTIONS BY MEMBER STATES

42. As General Assembly resolution 49/24 focuses on the assistance rendered by the international community with a view to facilitating the restoration of the basic services destroyed in the countries receiving refugees from Rwanda, to the extent possible, the present section covers only that assistance. Information related to assistance provided for the refugees is found in the report submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 49/23. The following Member States have submitted information on special assistance to countries receiving refugees from Rwanda, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/24.

43. In 1994, the Government of Finland contributed 1.6 million markkaa through the United Nations for Burundi and 2.5 million Fmk through UNICEF and Médecins sans frontières for Zaire.

44. Since July 1994, the Government of Germany has contributed emergency aid for Rwanda refugees in the amount of 62 million deutsche mark for both Zaire and the United Republic of Tanzania. It has assisted in drinking water treatment and distribution, and in the construction of latrines. This aid has also benefited the local population. Specifically, a DM 30 million programme was launched to eliminate refugee-caused damage in the Kivu area. The programme included measures designed to protect the environment and natural resources, such as reforestation and the introduction of a concept to protect the Kahuzi-Biega and Virunga National Parks, and to rehabilitation the Goma-Bukavu road.

45. For the United Republic of Tanzania, the Government of Germany contributed DM 7.5 million to refugees camps, of which DM 5 million was for the rehabilitation of water supply systems in the camps and the surrounding areas.

46. Through the International Peace Cooperation Corps, the Government of Japan has provided to Zaire medical equipment for the Goma General Hospital, laboratory equipment for the AMI-Kivu Laboratory, scholastic materials for eight primary schools, trees for reforestation and vehicles for the AMI-Kivu Laboratory and the Centre of Research in Natural Science. The contribution amounted to 31.7 million yen. In addition, it dispatched volcanologists in late 1994 to observe Mount Nyiragongo in the Goma area which was threatening to explode. A contribution of 3.5 million yen was made to the Volcanic Laboratory in Goma. For the United Republic of Tanzania, supplies of canned fish were donated to the local population seriously affected by the flow of refugees.

47. The Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has taken into account environmental and economic concerns of affected populations in Zaire, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda and Burundi in determining support to non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies administering humanitarian aid to the refugees. In the United Republic of Tanzania, it provided 100,000 pounds to buy beans for the refugee camps from Tanzanian wholesalers, and began to implement a project, with Help Age

International, at a cost of 100,000 pounds, to provide care for older and disabled people in Kiragwe in the Kagera district.

VIII. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

48. Despite the considerable progress made in Rwanda in rehabilitating the country and improving its security, the latest forced expulsion of Rwandan and Burundian refugees from Zaire demonstrates that the crisis, which engulfed the Great Lakes region for more than a year, continues. The urgent need for more vigorous and concerted action by the international community to assist in stabilizing the region is obvious.

49. The international community, during the period under review, has extended massive assistance to more than 2 million people affected by the crisis in Rwanda. Whereas the focus has been on the provision of humanitarian assistance to those people, the countries receiving the refugees, despite their limited resources, have made substantial contributions by accepting the refugees and assisting in catering to their essential needs, while experiencing rising social tension and suffering nearly irreparable environmental degradation, notably in the United Republic of Tanzania and Zaire.

50. The international community will have to lend its strong support through assistance to countries of asylum to repair infrastructural and environmental damage and through support to countries of origin towards repatriation, rehabilitation and reconstruction. The commitment of, and the financial support from, the international community will be indispensable. But there will also be a need for sustained political pressure on all countries in the region to honour their commitments in agreeing to a strategy of accelerated, organized and voluntary return and subsequent reintegration.